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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 BUCHAREST 000447

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STATE DEPT. FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RO](#) [SOCI](#)

SUBJECT: DAS PEKALA'S VISIT TO ROMANIA HIGHLIGHTS BLACK SEA  
ISSUES, EU ACCESSION, CORRUPTION BATTLE

Classified By: Ambassador Nicholas Taubman for Reasons 1.4  
A, B and D

- A) Bucharest 408
- B) Bucharest 410
- C) Bucharest 278

¶1. (C) Summary. DAS Mark Pekala had a productive, upbeat series of meetings during his March 6-8 visit to Bucharest. He expressed strong USG support for Romania's June 5 "Black Sea Forum," (Ref C) and told Romanian officials the U.S. would be represented at an appropriate senior level. His Romanian counterparts also welcomed Pekala's outline of an evolving U.S. Black Sea regional strategy focused on democracy promotion, regional cooperation in areas such as border security and anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP), promotion of energy security, and support for such states as Ukraine and Georgia in their efforts toward further integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. GOR interlocutors, in turn, argued for greater "synergy among existing organizations and initiatives" in the Black Sea region, a point with which Pekala expressed agreement. Romanian officials and the EC Delegation head in Bucharest were optimistic about Romania acceding to the EU in January 2007, although they conceded that corruption remained a serious issue. GOR interlocutors promised to review U.S. concerns regarding key bilateral issues, including stalled international adoption cases, but did not promise specifics. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In his meeting with DAS Pekala, State Secretary for Global Affairs Teodor Baconschi expressed gratitude to the U.S. "for advancing Black Sea regional goals" and noted the importance of focusing on democracy promotion, non-military or "soft" security cooperation and energy security. Baconschi observed, however, that Romania is "a bit isolated...We're the most Euro-Atlantic state" along the Black Sea littoral even though Bulgaria and Georgia generally share Romanian attitudes. The bottom line, according to Baconschi, is that "we need more creative U.S. engagement in the region" and the U.S. should persuade Turkey to have a more Euro-Atlantic focus on Black Sea issues.

¶3. (C) Pekala confirmed to Baconschi U.S. support for Romania's June 5 "Black Sea Forum" and promised suitably high level attendance at the forum. He also expressed gratitude to Romania for its commitment to democracy, citing Romania's willingness last year to accept Uzbek refugees on short notice, important contributions in the Global War on Terror, including in Afghanistan and Iraq, and for Romania's cooperative attitude toward negotiating a Defense Cooperation Agreement with Romania. (Ref A) Turning to the case of

former Embassy Bucharest Marine Security Guard Chris VanGoethem's involvement in a 2004 car accident that caused the death of beloved Romanian musician Teo Peter, Pekala expressed condolences and deep regret. Baconschi averred that he had been surprised by the verdict of the court martial that acquitted VanGoethem of negligent homicide, but praised the ongoing "constructive work" with the Embassy, including on the topic of eventual compensation for Peter's family.

14. (C) Baconschi expressed a desire for increased U.S. investment in Romania and noted that Romania has taken steps over the past year to create a more favorable investment climate, including battling corruption and establishing a flat tax. Pekala acknowledged the significant potential for U.S. investment in Romania, but noted that increased investment was contingent on factors such as creating a transparent business environment, a level playing field for competitors and a fair tax structure. Pekala assured Baconschi of full U.S. support for Romania's EU accession. Regarding international adoptions, Pekala stated that the U.S. seeks a transparent and predictable result. Baconschi responded that he understood U.S. concerns about international adoptions and promised to help seek a mutually acceptable solution for cases caught in the adoption "pipeline." In response to a question from Pekala about the status of the award of the "Star of Romania" in 2004 by outgoing President Ion Iliescu to extreme nationalist politician Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Baconschi observed that "Tudor is a very aggressive politician." At least some members of the commission established to review the award "are afraid of Tudor," which Baconschi claimed was why the commission had taken no action. He promised to take unspecified steps to "try to stimulate a meeting of the commission."

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#### MFA Director Generals Agree on Black Sea Focus

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15. (C) During a working lunch with senior MFA officials, DAS Pekala underscored the importance of promoting democracy in the Black Sea region. He observed that the U.S. is still developing its complete Black Sea regional strategy but had formulated an outline incorporating four points. First, the U.S. will support the promotion of democracy and freedom. He cited programs that strengthen rule of law and develop civil society as furthering this goal, and noted that Romania has much to offer in advancing democracy in the region. Second, the U.S. backs regional security cooperation, such as anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP), environmental cooperation, emergency management measures, border security and anti-smuggling initiatives. Pekala pointed to SECI as an example of a successful regional security initiative. Third, the U.S. favors a regionalized approach to promoting energy security. Pekala observed that the larger Black Sea region presented opportunities to diversify energy suppliers. Fourth, he noted that the U.S. supported such countries as Ukraine and Georgia in their efforts to work toward integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. In regard to all four points, Pekala stated that Romania has the potential to play the role of a bridge to countries across the Black Sea, and elsewhere. He expressed gratitude for Romanian initiatives regarding the Black Sea region, which have helped encourage the U.S. to develop a regional strategy.

16. (C) MFA Director General for Political Affairs Ovidiu Dranga told Pekala that the GOR fully supported the evolving U.S. strategy for the Black Sea region, as outlined by Pekala, since Romania's "strategic aim is to anchor the region to the strategic mainstream" by supporting "freedom, democracy, access to resources...and not only energy." He characterized Romania's proposed Black Sea Forum this June (Ref C) as promoting these goals through regional cooperation and the creation of "synergy among existing organizations and initiatives." Pekala remarked that creating and enhancing

synergy between and among existing organizations, such as BSEC and SECI, would be helpful toward achieving mutual goals in the Black Sea region.

¶17. (C) Dranga opined that the U.S. vision was "compatible with the emerging policy for the Black Sea." Dranga expressed gratitude for U.S. support for the Forum, including the promise of attendance by a senior USG official. He acknowledged that it "is still difficult to convince key partners...although we have had more positive signs from Ankara than from Moscow." According to Dranga, Russia is attempting to link its support for the June Forum with Romanian acquiescence to an expanded BLACKSEAFOR (see paragraph 9), a tradeoff the GOR deems unacceptable. "The train is moving, get on," is the message Romania would send to Russia regarding the Forum, Dranga stated.

¶18. (C) MFA Director General for "Extended Europe" Razvan Rusu affirmed that Romania was "working to push Romania in a European direction...and is involved in working with Georgia in a number of different ways." Rusu stated that Romania is using its six-month rotating chairmanship of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) organization to encourage tangible cooperation among member states. He expressed concern, however, about limited "political commitment" by some BSEC members, citing as an example a BSEC "good governance working group meeting, to which Russia did not even show up, even though it was the chair." MFA Director General for Global Affairs Stelian Stoian observed that "the pillars of the U.S. strategy are similar to our own strategy" and that "revitalizing the Council of Europe, which enjoys EU support," was an important strategy for building democratic institutions. Stoian opined that disappointing developments in Ukraine over the past year illustrated the importance of building stronger regional democratic institutions since "any bilateral issue can be solved between two democracies." Rusu added that Romania has "real concerns" about Ukraine but expressed the hope that the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) process "could be used to move Ukraine on every issue...including its lack of predictability in its interactions with its neighbors."

¶19. (C) MFA Director General for Strategic Policy Cristian Istrate criticized proposed Russian-Turkish expansion of Operation BLACKSEAFOR. Romania's bottom line, according to Istrate, is that "we won't create a new alliance and we oppose going beyond the current scope of the BLACKSEAFOR agreement." Istrate continued that the expanded BLACKSEAFOR

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would be a "hard security" mechanism and "to succeed in the Black Sea region we need to concentrate on soft security issues." According to Istrate, NATO should assume a Black Sea role, "using soft security tools" such as Partnership for Peace programs and civil emergency planning.

#### Presidential Counselors Address BLACKSEAFOR Concerns

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¶10. (C) During a working lunch with Presidential Counselor for Domestic Policy Claudiu Saftoiu and State Counselor for National Security Constantin Degeratu, Pekala underscored his appreciation for Romania's solid strategic partnership with Romania, promising that the U.S. "does not take its relation with Romania for granted." Pekala raised the VanGoethem/Teo Peter case and expressed deep regret.

¶11. (C) Saftoiu and Degeratu expressed strong agreement with the U.S. vision for the Black Sea region. They vowed that Romania would be "deeply involved" and would "work to support the promotion of democracy and soft security" strategies, such as anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP) initiatives. Saftoiu stressed regarding the Black Sea region that the "majority of your positions overlap with our positions." Raising Russian and Turkish plans to expand Operation BLACKSEAFOR, Degeratu stated that Romania's goal is to "slow down this development." (Note: Degeratu did not suggest that

Romania was considering a possible withdrawal from BLACKSEAFOR. End Note.) Degeratu asserted that an expanded BLACKSEAFOR along Russian and Turkish lines would preclude a direct U.S./NATO presence in the Black Sea and Romania "does not want to exclude an American presence...Our goal is an increased American presence." Saftoiu stated that Romania continued to support the expansion of the NATO-led Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) into the Black Sea, but Romanian policy makers understood that "the Turks don't want to go with it." Saftoiu and Degeratu also raised recent developments concerning the ratification of the U.S.-Romanian Defense Cooperation Agreement and ethnic-Hungarian politics. (Refs A and B)

#### America's "Devoted Partner"

¶12. (C) Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu's Chief of Staff Mihnea Constantinescu told Pekala and the Ambassador in a separate meeting that Romania was and would remain "a devoted partner" of the U.S. and would maintain its commitments in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Constantinescu raised international adoptions, promising that "we are trying to do our best to accommodate all interests" on this topic. He acknowledged, however, that the unresolved adoption cases stuck in the "pipeline" represented the most difficult bilateral issue between the U.S. and Romania. Without elaborating, he stated that that "the pressure from your Embassy is relentless" on the subject of international adoptions. In response to Pekala's affirmation that the U.S. would like its economic and trade relationship with Romania to be as strong as possible, Constantinescu stressed that bilateral economic issues, notably the Bechtel highway project and poultry and pork tariffs, are "on the top of our agenda." Pekala pointed out that transparency and predictability were essential in regard to these issues. Constantinescu stated that Romania was committed to tangible cooperation in the Black Sea region and the Balkans. He cited Romanian plans to hold "high level negotiations" April 6 in Bucharest as the first step in establishing "a free trade area in the region." He described the April 6 meeting as "the first time we will have at the same table senior government representatives from the Western Balkans." Constantinescu said Romania sought Embassy attendance and support for the meeting.

¶13. (C) Constantinescu opined that the Bucharest-based Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime "won't work without U.S. cooperation and support...you need to continue the process of supporting SECI" since SECI's programs are crucial regional initiatives. "I have to express my frustration...I don't always feel enough support from the State Department for SECI," Constantinescu stated. (Note: In a separate meeting at SECI Center, SECI Director Mitja Mocnik underscored to DAS Pekala that SECI is a successful regional cooperation mechanism that "is one of a kind in Eastern Europe, but depends on U.S. support." He added that in recent years SECI has developed a more ambitious approach and widened its focus to address major regional threats. He cited recent SECI efforts aimed at regional counterterrorism cooperation, including a SECI-organized meeting of regional

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anti-terrorism and organized crime experts. Mitja also noted a significant increase in the SECI Counternarcotics Task Force's operations and successful prosecutions. He pointed out that law enforcement officials from 12 countries were currently working together at the SECI center. End Note.) Raising the topic of Romania's rotating BSEC chairmanship, Constantinescu described current BSEC initiatives, including a meeting in Bucharest the week of March 13 to discuss regional transport facilitation, as "the kind of soft cooperation that could help with building cooperation in other areas," including responding to natural disasters, civil emergencies and environmental issues.

## Timely EU Accession, Battling Corruption

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¶14. (C) Constantinescu underscored that Romania's "top priority" at this time was entry into the European Union (EU) by January 2007. He stated that he had just returned from Brussels and that his impression was that Romania was "on a good track for EU accession" in January 2007. Constantinescu said Romania would continue to "seek U.S. help to strengthen its market capacity" and battle corruption in order to enter the EU on schedule. The "fight against corruption has the strong commitment of the President and Prime Minister...who offer full support" to Romania's crusading Justice Minister Monica Macovei. Pausing, Constantinescu observed that some Western European newspapers have dubbed Macovei a "Jeanne d'Arc of present times."

## EC Bucharest Rep Bullish on January 2007 Accession

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¶15. (C) European Commission (EC) Delegation Head Jonathan Scheele told DAS Pekala and the Ambassador in a separate meeting that the EC recognized that postponing Romania's EU accession would "at best gain an extra three months real work," but would more likely cause a political crisis in Romania. Scheele strongly implied that the EC had already made the political decision for enlargement, and delaying the January 2007 accession date would do more harm than good. He sardonically observed that "postponement was never dreamed up with the goal of postponement, but was designed against accession fatigue," continuing that it would be "more difficult to postpone" accession than to move ahead on schedule. Scheele said he would be very surprised if postponement were recommended for Romania, and added that in practical terms, the accession decision cannot be made later than June due to bureaucratic inertia.

¶16. (C) Scheele observed that some states have delayed ratification until they see the critical May 16 EC report, but noted that no state requires a referendum. He ticked off a list of countries: Austria, Romania's largest source of foreign direct investment, "won't delay" for economic reasons; the French would be highly unlikely to vote against Romania's accession given Chirac's attendance at the Francophone Summit in Bucharest this September; and, the "more difficult" Dutch lower house of parliament had already given its thumbs up to accession by a two-to-one margin. According to Scheele, the Germans are the "only dodgy ones," but would ultimately rely on the Commission's report. He also cited a report by German prosecutors, who praised Romanian efforts to combat organized crime and terrorism with the observation that "not all EU states are that good."

¶17. (C) Scheele acknowledged that he did not know what the EC would decide about Bulgaria's accession since the situation now looked much less positive there than 18 months ago. Pekala mentioned that the U.S. is hard on Bulgaria on the issue of organized crime. Scheele said the EU welcomes this position as the "EU has to rely on trust." Scheele said that the Commission was developing some sort of public monitoring that would continue after accession. He continued that, in contrast to Bulgaria, "Romania looks alarmingly positive," although it was difficult to believe Romania's progress could be sustained. Scheele remarked that every EU member state "thinks the world of Justice Minister Monica Macovei" and her efforts to battle corruption and reform the judiciary, but noted that Romanian corruption remains a major problem and the "belief in impunity is incredible." Scheele singled out two potential post accession issues for Romania: toning down expectations, since "if the payment agencies are not in place, Romania won't get money," and the need to define a national direction once Romania is a member of both NATO and the EU.

## Justice Minister's Take on Anti-Corruption Campaign

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¶18. (C) During her meeting with DAS Pekala and the Ambassador, Justice Minister Macovei stated that Romania appears to be headed toward a January 2007 EU accession, asserting that EU observers who prepared peer review assessments for the May EU report were genuinely impressed with Romania's efforts. She expressed concern, however, that political support for anti-corruption efforts was waning, citing two recent parliamentary votes, including one that failed to lift immunity for former PM and Chamber of Deputies President Adrian Nastase in a pending anti-corruption case. In response to Pekala's emphasis on ensuring even-handedness in the anti-corruption fight, Macovei defended the political neutrality of anti-corruption prosecutors, asserting that they have "no political color in their work." Macovei urged the Embassy to encourage MPs to support anti-corruption legislation and asked the Ambassador to make more public statements against corruption, praising the positive effect of the Embassy's statement when the anticorruption department's jurisdiction over MPs was at stake. Turning to judicial reform, Macovei asserted that the former ruling Social Democratic Party (PSD) as well as two center-right governing coalition parties, the ethnic Hungarian (UDMR) and Conservative (PC) parties, wanted to strip the Justice Minister of the right to ask the Superior Council of Magistrates to revoke a magistrate's appointment. She also alleged that the UDMR had vowed to block MOJ initiatives. Macovei acknowledged the importance of judicial independence but asserted "sayig there is corruption in the justice system is nt interfering."

¶19. (C) Regarding the time-sensitive return of one of the four Nazi war criminals to Romania, Macovei promised to raise the case with Ministry of Interior officials, who sponsored the law that forbade their extradition to Romania. She expressed doubt that the extraditions could occur absent a revision of current law. She asserted that Romania "also wants justice" but questioned the value of extraditions. Upon Pekala's request, Macovei also promised to discuss with President Basescu the status of the commission's inquiry regarding the revocation of Corneliu Vadim Tudor's "Star of Romania."

#### A Dissenting View from Geoana

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¶20. (C) In his meeting with DAS Pekala and the Ambassador, PSD President and Senate Foreign Policy Committee President Mircea Geoana asserted that Romania is "close to the limit" of what it can achieve in the "military and strategic dimension." Despite bona fide accomplishments in these areas, Geoana continued, Romania "is still fragile on democracy, social issues and economic matters...and there is room for "extremist voices." "We don't want Romania to become another Nigeria, with military might but (not advanced) economically and socially." He predicted widespread disenchantment with both the EU and NATO post-EU accession as expectations failed to meet reality. He also foretold that Romania's foreign policy "national consensus of bringing Romania to the West" via EU and NATO accession "is about to end and we are at a crunch time in Romania." Regarding the Black Sea region, ex-FM Geoana agreed that "we must do all we can to promote democracy" and added that "we should not give up hope regarding Russia...we need to erase the dividing line between the former Soviet Europe and the rest of Europe."

¶21. (C) Geoana admitted that the PSD lost the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections on "moral grounds" because of the widespread perception the party and its leaders were corrupt. "If we want to govern again...we need to bring forward a new generation of leaders and we need to fight corruption," he concluded. In response to Pekala's urging that Romania should vigorously battle corruption, Geoana agreed, but asserted that Romania should "fight corruption correctly, not via press leaks" from anti-corruption prosecutors. He complained that the GOR and Basescu do not constructively engage with the PSD on key national issues, including security, administrative reform

and economic policy. He asked DAS Pekala and the Ambassador to tell GOR interlocutors to "engage the opposition."

Press Roundtable

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¶22. (SBU) DAS Pekala emphasized to leading Bucharest-based journalists during a press roundtable that the U.S. and Romania were allies with a strong bilateral relationship. Several press reports cited his observation that the

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U.S.-Romanian Defense Cooperation Agreement "is a manifestation of our partnership and alliance." (Ref A) Press reports also cited his statement that the U.S. seeks to promote democracy, freedom, market economies and border security in the Black Sea region and that the U.S. and EU seek to promote democracy "on Europe's periphery."

¶23. (U) DAS Pekala has cleared this message.

¶24. (U) AmEmbassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:  
[www.state.sgov.gov/eur/Bucharest](http://www.state.sgov.gov/eur/Bucharest)  
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